

# News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services



29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03302-0095  
For information online, visit [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)  
James P. Martin, Public Information Officer  
(603) 271-3710; [jmartin@des.state.nh.us](mailto:jmartin@des.state.nh.us)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: Pam Schnepfer, DES: (603) 271-3994**  
**Jane Vachon, NHFG: (603) 271-3211**

## **New Hampshire Fish Consumption Guidelines Updated**

CONCORD, N.H. - State officials responsible for monitoring New Hampshire waterways and protecting public health released updated fish consumption advice that includes several new recommendations: Stocked (hatchery-grown) trout are exempt from the statewide advisory; perch are included with other species that have length restrictions regarding consumption; and four new waterbodies have specific advisories (Dubes Pond, Jackman Reservoir, Mascoma Lake and Tower Hill Pond).

Fish are a great source of low fat protein and other nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, but some fish contain mercury. Although mercury levels in fish are usually low, it's good to follow some precautions to limit mercury exposure if you eat fish often. Infants and children are particularly sensitive to the effects of mercury since their nervous systems are still forming. That is why it is especially important for women who may become pregnant, infants and children to limit eating the fish that contain high levels of mercury.

The statewide mercury fish advisory recommends that women of childbearing age and children under age seven limit freshwater fish consumption to one meal per month, others can safely eat four meals per month. A meal equals 8 ounces of fish for adults and 4 ounces for children under age 7.

Changes in the updated guidelines include:

- Stocked (hatchery-grown) trout contains relatively low levels of mercury. For hatchery-grown rainbow and brown trout, women of childbearing age and children can safely eat one meal per week, others can eat 6 meals per week. Lake trout and brook trout should be consumed at the rate of the statewide advisory.
- When eating bass, pickerel, white perch or yellow perch, limit consumption to fish 12 inches or less in length while following the above guidelines.
- Four additional New Hampshire waterbodies have specific advisories -- Dubes Pond, Jackman Reservoir, Mascoma Lake and Tower Hill Pond.

“New Hampshire’s fish consumption guidelines are consistent with advice being given in other states throughout the country -- eat fish, but choose wisely,” said Pamela Schnepfer, Toxicologist with the DES Environmental Health Program. “New Hampshire waters offer a bounty of fish for people to eat. Our advisory serves to guide consumers about their choices.”

New Hampshire fish consumption guidelines are published on the DES website and in the N.H. Freshwater Fishing Digest, which is provided with each fishing license. Ocean fish and shellfish guidelines are also available at [http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Fishing/sw\\_fish\\_consumption.htm](http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/Fishing/sw_fish_consumption.htm).

DES is currently revising the brochure “Is it safe to eat the fish we catch?” to reflect the updates; in the meantime, the updated advisory is available on a fact sheet at [www.des.nh.gov/pdf/mercury\\_fish.pdf](http://www.des.nh.gov/pdf/mercury_fish.pdf).

The updated guidelines are as follows:

### **Fish Consumption Guidelines**

For all freshwater fish (except stocked trout), please follow these fish consumption guidelines provided by the N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES):

- Pregnant and nursing women, and women who may get pregnant CAN SAFELY EAT one 8-ounce meal per month of freshwater fish.
- Children under age 7 CAN SAFELY EAT one 4-ounce meal per month of freshwater fish.
- All other adults and children age 7 and older CAN SAFELY EAT four 8- ounce meals per month of freshwater fish.
- When eating bass, pickerel, white perch or yellow perch, limit consumption to fish 12 inches or less in length while following the above guidelines.
- Stocked trout contains relatively low levels of mercury. For rainbow and brown trout women of childbearing age and children can safely eat one meal per week, others can eat 6 meals per week. Brook trout could be either stocked or from a reproducing population, therefore they should be consumed at the rate of the general statewide advisory.
- Additional guidelines apply to freshwater fish taken from Ashuelot Pond in Washington, Crystal Lake in Gilmanton, Dubes Pond in Hookset, Jackman Reservoir in Hillsboro, May Pond in Washington, Tower Hill Pond in Candia, the Comerford and Moore Reservoirs on the Connecticut River, and the Androscoggin River from Berlin to the Maine border.

All dietary sources of fish-mercury should be considered together. For example, a pregnant woman may have one meal of freshwater fish, but is advised not to consume any additional mercury-containing freshwater or saltwater fish or shellfish that month.

To find more information regarding the health effects of mercury or details on waterbody-specific advisories, please call the DES Environmental Health Program at (603) 271-3994 or go to [www.des.nh.gov/ARD/EHP/HRA/index.html](http://www.des.nh.gov/ARD/EHP/HRA/index.html).

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